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Amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 Expedited Procedure
Examining Group 2425

PATENT

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of a video program by an end user, the multi-channel video distribution system comprising:

a program distribution system adapted to provide linearly-scheduled programs with predetermined rights to a plurality of end user viewing devices all limited by the predetermined rights, wherein the linearly-scheduled programs are distributed according to a linear schedule including multiple channels that simultaneously distribute the linearly-scheduled programs;

a viewing control system in communication with the program distribution system and the end user viewing devices, the viewing control system, comprising:

a parental control programming function;

a viewing limit configuration menu adapted to receive parental control rules from an end user, wherein:

the parental control rules define program viewing limits for a plurality of time periods, the plurality of time periods comprising a first time period and a second time period, wherein:

the first time period comprising a first scheduled start time and a first scheduled stop time; and

the second time period comprising a second scheduled start time and a second scheduled stop time; and

the parental control rules curtail the predetermined rights to create defined program viewing limits; and

a program viewing limit control system that:

counts a first number of viewings of a first program and a second number of viewings of a second program during the first time period, the first program having a first point value and the second program having a second point value;

determines whether a first time period spent budget based on the first number of viewings of the first program, the second number of viewings of the second program, the first point value, and the second point value exceeds a first time period viewing limit budget;

determines a roll over amount when the first time period viewing limit budget exceeds the first time period spent budget, the roll over amount being limited by a parental control rule;

prevents further viewings of the first program and the second program during the first time period if the first time period spent budget exceeds the first time period viewing limit budget and inserts a pre-selected program;

counts a third number of viewings of the first program and a fourth number of viewings of the second program during the second time period;

determines whether a second time period spent budget based on the third number of viewings of the first program, the fourth number of viewings of the second program, the first point value, and the second point value exceeds a second time period viewing limit budget; and

prevents further viewings of the first program and the second program during the second time period if the second time period spent budget exceeds the second time period viewing limit budget combined with the roll over amount and inserts a pre-selected program.

2. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the parental control rules define program viewing limits based on one or more criteria selected from the group consisting of time period, program content, or a combination of time period and program content.

3. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 2, wherein the program viewing limits can be set to zero for adult content.

4. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 2, wherein the program viewing limits can be set high for educational content.

5. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 2, wherein the program viewing limits can be set low for a time period after school.

6. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 2, wherein the program viewing limits can be set low for a late night time period.

7. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the parental control programming system is adapted to receive and implement defined parental control rules for a plurality of end users, and wherein the program viewing limit control system is adapted to apply the defined parental control rules to each of the plurality of end users.

8. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the program distribution system comprises a system selected from the group including a cable programming

transmission network, a satellite programming transmissions network, or an audio or video server connected to the Internet.

9. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the viewing control system comprises a server located at a program service provider.

10. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the viewing control system is configured with the program distribution system.

11. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the viewing control system comprises a computing device at an end user location in communication with a server located at a program service provider.

12. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 11, wherein the computing device comprises a device selected from the group including a set-top box, a personal video recorder (PVR), a video server, a television having set-top box and/or PVR functionality built therein, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a portable media center, a portable viewing device, and a personal computing device.

13. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the programs comprise programs selected from group including pay per view video on demand (VOD) programs, near VOD programs, subscription VOD, cable television programs, terrestrially broadcast programs, satellite television programs, and music programs.

14. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the time period can be based on years, months, weeks, days, portions of days, or hours.

15. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 14, wherein the portions of days comprise morning, afternoon, evening, night and prime time viewing period.

16. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more end user viewing devices comprises a device selected from the group including a television set, a set-top box, a personal video recorder (PVR), a computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a wireless phone, a portable media center, or any combination of these devices.

17. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the viewing control system is adapted to:

count a number of viewings viewed using all of the one or more end user viewing devices; and

prevent further viewings for all of the one or more end user viewing devices if the number of viewings exceeds the viewing limit for the time period.

18. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the viewing control system is adapted to:

count a number of viewings viewed by each of the one or more end user viewing devices separately; and

prevent further viewings for each of the one or more end user viewing devices separately if the number of viewings for the one or more viewing devices exceeds the viewing limit for the time period.

19. (Original) The multi-channel video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user as recited in claim 1, wherein the program is delivered as part of a linear schedule of programs.

20. (Currently Amended) In a multi-channel video distribution system for delivering video program content to end users as part of a linear schedule of simultaneously available program, a method for controlling viewing of programs by an end user, the method comprising steps of:

receiving linearly-scheduled programs with predetermined rights, wherein the linearly-scheduled programs are distributed according to a linear schedule including multiple channels that simultaneously distribute the linearly-scheduled programs;

receiving parental control rules from an end user using a viewing limit configuration menu, wherein the parental control rules:

define program viewing limits for ~~one or more~~ a plurality of time periods, wherein the ~~one or more~~ a plurality of time periods includes a first time period and a second time period, the first time period comprising with a first scheduled start time and a first scheduled stop time; and

curtail the predetermined rights to create defined program viewing limits;

counting a first number of viewings of a program during the ~~one or more~~ first time period and a second number of viewings of the program during the second time period;

determining whether the first number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limits for the ~~one or more~~ first time period and

determining a roll over amount if the defined program viewing limit for the first time period exceeds the first number of viewings;

preventing further viewings of the program during the first time period if the first number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limits for the ~~one or more~~ first time period[[s]] and ~~inserts~~ inserting a pre-selected program;

determining whether the second number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limit for the second time period; and

preventing further viewings of the program during the second time period if the second number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limit for the second time period combined with the roll over amount.

21. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 20, wherein the parental control rules define program viewing limits based on one or more criteria selected from the group consisting of time period, program content, or a combination of time period and program content.

22. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 21, wherein the program viewing limits can be set to zero for adult content.

23. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 21, wherein the program viewing limits can be set high for educational content.

24. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 21, wherein the program viewing limits can be set low for a time period after school.

25. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 21, wherein the program viewing limits can be set low for a late night time period.

26. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 20, wherein the step of receiving parental control rules comprises receiving defined parental control rules for each of a plurality of end users, and wherein the method further comprises applying the defined parental control rules to each of the plurality of end users.

27. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 20, wherein the programs comprise programs selected from group including pay per view video on demand (VOD) programs, near VOD programs, subscription VOD, cable television programs, satellite television programs, terrestrially broadcast programs, and music programs.

28. (Currently Amended) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 20, wherein the ~~one or more~~ plurality of time periods can be based on years, months, weeks, days, portions of days, or hours.

29. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 28, wherein the portions of days comprise morning, afternoon, evening, night and prime time viewing period.

30. (Original) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 20, wherein the one or more end user viewing devices comprises a device selected from the group including a television set, a set-top box, a personal video recorder (PVR), a computer, a PDA, a cellular phone, or any combination of these devices.

31. (Currently Amended) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 20, wherein the step of counting ~~[[a]]~~ the first

number of viewings comprises counting a total number of viewings viewed using all of the one or more end user viewing devices, and wherein the step of preventing further viewings of the program during the first time period comprises preventing further viewings for all of the one or more end user viewing devices if the total number of viewings exceeds the defined viewing limit for the first time period.

32. (Currently Amended) The method for controlling the viewing of programs by the end user as recited in claim 20, wherein the step of counting ~~[[a]]~~ the first number of viewings comprises counting a separate number of viewings viewed by each of the one or more viewing devices separately, and wherein the step of preventing further viewings of the program during the first time period comprises preventing further viewings for each of the one or more viewing devices separately if the separate number of viewings for the one or more viewing devices exceeds the defined viewing limit for the first time period.

33. (Currently Amended) A video distribution system for controlling viewing of a video program by an end user, where the video program is distributed as part of a schedule of programs, the multi-channel video distribution system comprising:

means for distributing linearly-scheduled programs with predetermined rights to one or more end user viewing devices all limited by the predetermined rights;

~~means for receiving parental control rules from an end user, wherein the parental control rules:~~

means for ~~defining~~ receiving parental control rules from an end user, wherein the parental control rules define program viewing limits for a plurality of time periods that curtail the predetermined rights to create defined program viewing limits and the plurality of time periods includes a first time period and a second time period;

a counter for counting a first number of viewings of a program during the first time period and a second number of viewings of the program during the second time period;

means for determining whether the first number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limit for the first time period;

means for determining a roll over amount if the defined program viewing limit for the first time period exceeds the first number of viewings;

means for preventing further viewings of the program during the first time period if the first number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limit for the first time period;

means for determining whether the second number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limit for the second time period; and

means for preventing further viewings of the program during the second time period if the second number of viewing exceeds the defined program viewing limit for the second time period combined with the roll over amount.

34. (Original) The video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user, where the video program is distributed as part of the schedule of programs as recited in claim 33, further comprising an advertising screen presented if the number of viewings exceeds the defined program viewing limit for the one or more time periods.

35. (Original) The video distribution system for controlling viewing of the video program by the end user, where the video program is distributed as part of the schedule of programs as recited in claim 33, wherein the program is removed from listings an interactive program guide when the program reaches the defined viewing limit.